

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Cell Phone Security - Privacy concerns](#)

Jonsnothere - September 30, 2021, 10:05 am

I would like to know what the best option is for Custom Firmware that can be installed on devices that can promise true, private use of a cell phone.

Recent concerns about tracking, lack of privacy, applications running background downloads, I can't get a clear picture of what these things are doing, taking, listening in to, only conspiracy threads about monitoring and want to start securing my information and blocking out things from tracking my activities.

I don't do anything illegal, I just don't trust my information to these big tech corporations and want to get out of this Matrix of association.

An example of a simple switch is GPS location tracking, most devices allow you to turn this off but how do I know the applications aren't secretly tracking GPS coordinates, copying my texts messages and logging them...

Anyway I would like to know if there even is an option for a truly user controlled firmware for a cell phone and any suggestions otherwise

Faith Connors - September 30, 2021, 12:23 pm

the short answer is "sell your smartphone and buy a flip phone that is only capable of calling and texting. never use the built-in web browser."

(Sep 30, 2021 10:05 AM)Jonsnothere Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I would like to know what the best option is for Custom Firmware that can be installed on devices that can promise true, private use of a cell phone. no security software (or hardware for that matter) can truly promise full security/unhackability/untraceability/complete privacy/etc.

Quote:Recent concerns about tracking, lack of privacy, applications running background downloads, I can't get a clear picture of what these things are doing, taking, listening in to, only conspiracy threads about monitoring and want to start securing my information and blocking out things from tracking my activities.

you have the right mindset, ill tell you that much.
but im also getting the notion that you dont have the time/energy/effort to dedicate towards actually learning about security or compsci related subjects that will help you in securing your devices.

call me a gatekeeper, i dont care.
if you dont take the time to understand why you're doing something, or what something is supposed to accomplish, then you wont understand the limitations of what you're doing, or you won't do it properly and you'll continue using "secure" software/hardware in an unsecure manner, which is the opposite of what you want to accomplish.

many apps like Uber/Lyft/UberEats/Skipthedishes etc. actually won't run without Google Play services.

many apps like Google Maps will run, but will not perform their task correctly (and simultaneously will still try to send data back to Big Tech™

if you install Google Play services, the services will send data back to Big Tech™

are you willing to sacrifice that functionality of your phone?

are you willing to research and find alternatives to common apps?

are you willing to accept the risks of using third-party releases of apps that might be backdoored that you download from Aptoide or other app markets because you cant download from Google Play?

if you answered "no" to any of these questions, then true privacy is not for you.

if you answered "yes" to all of them, then my initial statement of just using a dumbphone holds true, because you'll need to downgrade a bit

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im sure :)

Quote:An example of a simple switch is GPS location tracking, most devices allow you to turn this off but how do I know the applications aren't secretly tracking GPS coordinates, copying my texts messages and logging them...

you don't. simple as.

if you dont have access to the entire codebase of your phone AND have access to hardware schematics and a means of verifying that the hardware is labeled correctly (i.e. the cpu really IS a snapdragon 888 and not a snapdragon 865 that's labeled 888) and you don't have enough time to go through everything yourself, then you can never be certain

now, i'm sure you're about to ask "well why cant i just use paranoidandroid??" (or insert-ROM-name-here) "they say they are privacy-centric no google services superprivate!!1!" and i'll give you two points to consider:

1. if you are willing to blindly trust some internet randoms telling you its secure, then why arent you willing to blindly trust big tech when they say they are secure?

if anything, the big tech company has a dedicated team for security and privacy with proper funding. the point of opensource is that you can look at the source and change it at will if you find something you dont like.

using opensource is cool, but you cant expect opensource to be perfect. thats why opensource is, well, opensource. more contribution = accelerated development.

2. third-party projects run by open-source devs and community rarely receive updates.

it's like at least once a month that there's a new android vulnerability out in the wild posted on exploit-db with a PoC.

i used paranoidandroid on my phone for YEARS (on a oneplus3) and i was stuck using android 7 until earlier this year when i finally upgraded my phone.

i think they only actually pushed an update over the air to my phone a total of one (1) time maybe a couple months after i installed the rom.

try to count how many vulns didnt get patched over that time period (mid 2018 era to mid 2021) (hint: youll need more than 2 hands)

now with all that out of the way, go ahead and install a custom ROM, a minimal googleplayservices

package, and whatever apps you need to survive your day-to-day life.

it'll make your phone significantly safer for the short-term.

for long-term solutions, learn more about android and how data aggregation actually works, and what kind of data they're grabbing, and what you can actually/realistically prevent grabbing of.

just understand that at the end of the day, nothing is perfect, and if you want it to be perfect, you'll need to downgrade your tech a bit or really delve deep into developing for your phone yourself.

Jonsnothere - *September 30, 2021, 1:02 pm*

Thanks for the thorough response, you've identified even things I didn't say, I appreciate that.

I was an android user back when it was promised as this open sourced style project but quickly found the harsh reality of just how vulnerable it was, I then switched to Blackberry only to be disappointed with their switch to an android kernel so then switched to iOS touted at the time as a fully secure and controllable system. Every iteration it seems that more actual control is lost, data goes wherever it wants but my concerns over privacy aren't so much to mask illicit behaviour, illegal activities, I truly did mean that.

It's more a concern over what my phone is doing, sadly the solution is build my own system which I don't have the time for, or not use functions I can't control. I don't trust Google, apple, Microsoft or even isp/cell providers.

I was hoping more that there was a Linux based system I could use actually, any options you know of like that?

Zians - *October 16, 2021, 12:52 pm*

cipher is the way to go tbh